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INSIDE

U.S. Will Continue To Support Emerging Democracies in 2006

President Bush praised the elections in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005 and said that in the coming year, "America will continue to stand beside these young democracies and lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren."

Bush's remarks came as part of his New Year's message, which was released by the White House December 30.

The president also remembered the victims of hurricanes on the U.S. Gulf Coast, and American military personnel who had made sacrifices in the past year.



President George W. Bush and Laura Bush stand before the White House Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House. In keeping with this year's theme, "All Things Bright and Beautiful!"

White House photo by Eric Draper

The president said he and the first lady "look with hope to the year ahead and the many new opportunities the future will bring."

Following is the text of President Bush's New Year message:

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press
Secretary
(Crawford, Texas)

December 30,
2005

New Year's Day,
2006

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Rice, Education Secretary To Host International Education Summit

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will co-host the U.S. University Presidents Summit on International Education, a forum to renew partnerships to strengthen international education, the State Department announced December 28.



Dr. Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Secretary of State

The January 5-6, 2006, summit, organized by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), will initiate a dialogue with leaders of U.S. higher education on the need for government and nongovernmental officials to work collaboratively.

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U.S. Will Continue To Support Emerging Democracies . . .

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The New Year is a time of hope as we reflect on the past and prepare for the future.

The great strength of our Nation lies in the hearts and souls of the American people. This past year, Americans responded with an outpouring of compassion to help the people of the Gulf Coast region recover from one of the most devastating natural disasters in our Nation's history. We remember the victims of the past year's hurricanes and give thanks for the millions of people who opened their hearts, homes, and communities to those in need.

In the past year, we continued our work to spread freedom and peace. In 2005, Iraqis three times exercised their right to vote in free elections, and the Afghan people conducted successful parliamentary elections. In the coming year, America will continue to stand beside these young democracies and lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

We appreciate the brave men and women in uniform who protect our country and advance freedom around the world. We are grateful to their families for their support and sacrifice, and we pray for all those who have lost loved ones in freedom's cause. Our Nation will always remember the heroes who

have given their lives to protect us all.

As we celebrate the New Year, we give thanks to God for His blessings and ask for His guidance. We look with hope to the year ahead and the many new opportunities the future will bring.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a happy New Year. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

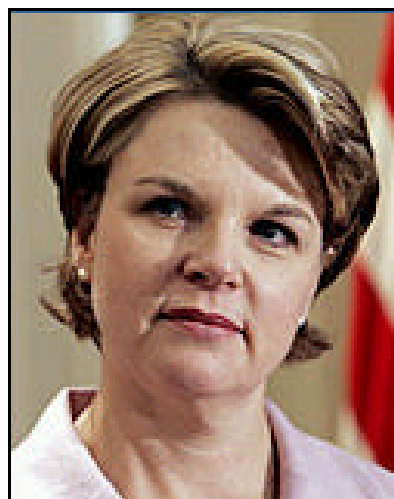
Rice, Education Secretary To Host International Education . . .

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ratively toward a national vision for the future of U.S. higher education.

"Through this Summit, Secretary Rice and Secretary Spellings and their respective Departments want to reach out to college and university presidents to reinforce a common interest in attracting foreign students and scholars to U.S. institutions," Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes said in the announcement. "Of equal importance is seeking investment in educating globally competitive U.S. students to work in fields of international interest."

The summit will focus on how to attract foreign students and scholars to study in the United States,



Margaret Spellings
U.S. Secretary of Education

as well as how to encourage more U.S. students to study in other countries, according to the announcement.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, 565,039 foreign students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions, down 1.3 percent from the previous year's totals, according to the Open Doors 2005, an annual report on international academic mobility. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2005/Nov/14-84697.html>).

Summit participants will mirror the richness and diversity of the higher education system in the United States, coming from all 50 states,

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Rice, Education Secretary To Host International Education . . .

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and will include leading public and private research institutions, as well as community colleges, historically black institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, religiously affiliated institutions and women's colleges, the announcement said.

Participants plan to discuss marketing of U.S. higher education programs abroad, reaching out to underserved populations, understanding visa and regulatory processes, cooperating to meet exchange priorities and utilizing fully the international education resources of community colleges.

For information on studying in the United States, see ECA's EducationUSA (<http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>) Web site and the related article, "Global Network Providing Resources on Study in United States (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Jun/02-382002.html>)."

For more information on visa procedures and traveling to the United States, see www.travel.state.gov (<http://www.travel.state.gov/>) and the State Department electronic journal See You in the U.S.A. (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0905/ijpe/ijpe0905.htm>)

Below is the text of the State Department announcement with further details:

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman**
December 28, 2005

MEDIA NOTE

U.S. Departments of State and

Education to Host U.S. University Presidents Summit

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will co-host the U.S. University Presidents Summit on International Education January 5-6, 2006, in Washington, DC. The Secretaries will engage leaders of U.S. higher education in a renewed partnership to strengthen international education, emphasizing its importance to the national interest. Secretaries Rice and Spellings have called this Summit, organized by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, to initiate a dialogue on the need for government to work collaboratively with the non-governmental sector on the future of U.S. higher education in a global arena.

"Through this Summit, Secretary Rice and Secretary Spellings and their respective Departments want to reach out to college and university presidents to reinforce a common interest in attracting foreign students and scholars to U.S. institutions," notes Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. "Of equal importance is seeking investment in educating globally competitive U.S. students to work in fields of international interest."

Summit attendees will represent the full richness and diversity of the higher education system in the United States, coming from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and will include leading public and private research institutions, as well as community colleges, historically black institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, religiously affiliated institutions,

and women's colleges. Also invited are the principal presidential higher education associations and the heads of the federal science and humanities bodies.

The Summit will focus on how to attract foreign students and scholars to study in the United States, as well as how to encourage more American students to receive part of their education abroad. In addition, participants will discuss marketing of U.S. higher education programs abroad, reaching out to underserved populations, understanding visa and regulatory processes, cooperating to meet exchange priorities, and utilizing fully the international education resources of community colleges. The Summit will also draw attention to the key investments required to strengthen international higher education for Americans, including increasing access to study abroad, encouraging non-traditional study abroad locations, strengthening non-traditional language acquisition, developing dynamic international strategies at U.S. universities and colleges, and engaging the public and private sectors in a shared national vision for the future.

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Botswana Praised as Economic Model for Developing World

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- There are functioning stock exchanges and countless investment and trade opportunities that now exist throughout sub-Saharan Africa that, if fully developed, could help bring a higher level of economic growth and development to the continent.

To help promote such growth, and expand the volume of U.S.-Africa trade as well, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) recently opened a fourth trade hub office in Dakar, Senegal, to complement three already functioning hubs in Gaborone, Botswana; Nairobi, Kenya; and Accra, Ghana. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2005/Nov/08-38143.html>)).

To help draw attention to the many investment and trade opportunities across sub-Saharan Africa, the chief executive officer of the prestigious New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), John Thaine, praised Botswana as a "model for the developing world."

The southern African country, Thaine told reporters, has clearly "demonstrated growth and fiscal transparency that even bigger countries would envy." The NYSE executive also praised Botswana as the only African country with an A+ credit rating from both Standard and Poor's and Moody's rating services.

Thaine made his comments September 13, the same day the NYSE honored the nation of Botswana and its president, Festus G. Mogae, who was invited to ring

the closing bell, which ends floor trading that day on the exchange.

Such an event is very important, Thaine told reporters. "With President Mogae ringing the closing bell of the NYSE, people will ask questions and see that Botswana's track record is impressive."

Botswana has maintained one of the world's highest growth rates since its independence in 1966. Through fiscal discipline and sound management, the na-



tion has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$8,800 in 2003. Two major investment services rank Botswana as the best credit risk in Africa.

Diamond mining has fueled much of Botswana's expansion and currently accounts for more than one-third of GDP and for 90 percent of export earnings. Tourism, subsistence farming and cattle raising are other key sectors. On the downside, the government must deal with high rates of unemployment and poverty. Unemployment offi-

cially is 21 percent, but unofficial estimates place it closer to 40 percent. HIV/AIDS infection rates are the highest in the world and threaten Botswana's impressive economic gains.

Mogae is only the third African president who has been honored with an invitation to ring the NYSE's closing bell. His action was seen by more than 120 million television viewers around the world who track the international financial markets, such as the NYSE, and watch the closing ceremony. Former Zambian President Frederick Chiluba and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa also have rung the closing bell.

In further comments, Thaine stressed the important role stock markets play in the economies of prospering and successful nations. "As a mechanism for providing capital, a stock market is important," he said. "The African continent offers many opportunities for the future -- South Africa for obvious reasons, but Botswana also has potential and an impressive record to match."

Currently, the African Stock Exchanges Association, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, has member exchanges in a broad array of African countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, Botswana, Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Mauritius and Swaziland.

The International Monetary Fund recently noted that African stock exchanges currently offer some of the highest rates of return to in-

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U.S. Company Donates Maize Seed to Farmers in Malawi

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. chemical and agricultural company Monsanto announced December 20 its intention to donate 700 metric tons of quality hybrid maize seeds to needy farmers in Malawi. When properly planted and managed, the seeds are expected to feed more than 1 million hungry people for a year.

In a press release, the Monsanto Company valued the donation at \$840,000 and said that it is part of an integrated plan in which the seeds will be distributed through the Malawian government and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

U.S. Ambassador to Malawi Alan Eastham praised the U.S. company for its donation. "Monsanto has long been an important partner in the agricultural sector in Malawi," Eastham said. "The donation of hybrid seed to local farmers will potentially have a significant impact on the quality of next year's harvest and represents the best tradition of socially responsible giving by the U.S. private sector."

The 700 metric tons of white quality hybrid maize seeds, available in 5-kilogram (11-pound) bags, could reach as many as 140,000 Malawian farm families, the release noted.

Maize, known as corn in the United States, is the staple food in most southern African countries, accounting for more than one-third of calorie consumption in recent years. Maize also ranks among the world's major grain crops and dominates American agriculture. In 2004, close to 33 million hectares of maize were planted worldwide,

with a production value of more than \$23 billion. Maize also is converted to a range of processed food products and is an important material for industrial purposes and products, including rubber, plastics, fuel and clothing.

Since 2002, Malawi has continued to experience chronic food shortages due to drought, poverty and low crop yields. In 2005 alone, according to the Monsanto release, an estimated 5 million people are in dire need of food aid, and the Malawian government, the donor community and NGOs are working to avert a crisis.

Monsanto's initiative builds on existing programs driven by the Malawian government and local NGOs attempting to increase self-sufficiency at a local, family farm level. The Malawian government is already subsidizing fertilizer to raise production of food and, with the help of local NGOs, will ensure proper and prioritized distribution of the seeds.

"This generous donation comes at a critical time in Malawi," Malawian Minister of Agriculture Uladi Mussa said in the Monsanto press release announcing the donation.

"This access to quality hybrid maize seed complements very well our fertilizer subsidy program. Improved seeds, like hybrids and irrigation development, have shown for many decades to have greater yield potential, and this is a critical element of our plan to achieve food self-sufficiency in Malawi."

Antonio Valencia of Sasakawa Global 2000, which is involved in the promotion of conservation tillage in Malawi, said: "By enabling the local farmers to benefit from

hybrid seed, Monsanto is helping the government of Malawi stop the cycle of poverty. Those farmers following the conservation tillage method with this seed will not require food aid nor inputs from government next year."

With conservation tillage, crops are grown with minimal cultivation of the soil, leaving a large percentage of the soil covered by crop residues, thus protecting the soil from erosion.

A representative of World Vision Malawi, one of seven members of the NGO consortium, said, "This donation is addressing both the short-term and the long-term needs of the people in Malawi, and fits very well with our programs in this country."

Monsanto previously donated \$1 million, through the worldwide Monsanto Fund, to the World Food Program for the provision of emergency relief food aid to the poor and drought-affected population in Malawi and recently gave 120 metric tons of seed to the United Nations Development Program for the Millennium Development Goals villages program.

Monsanto Company is a leading global provider of technology-based solutions and agricultural products that improve farm productivity and food quality worldwide. Additional information (<http://www.monsanto.com/>) about Monsanto is available on the company's Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Patriot Act Renewal Vital To Protect Americans, President Says

Washington -- President Bush continues to voice his belief that renewal of expiring provisions of the 2001 USA Patriot Act is vital to the U.S. war against terrorism.

After a White House meeting of U. S. attorneys from around the country January 3, the president said even though the Patriot Act is "a really important tool" to protect the American people, key provisions in the act are "going to expire in 30 days."

When the Patriot Act was approved overwhelmingly in 2001 in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on the United States in which nearly 3,000 people were killed, Congress intentionally made 16 sections of the law temporary.

Congress extended the expiring provisions on December 22, 2005. Had Congress not extended them, those provisions would have expired December 31, 2005. Because of the extension, they are now set to expire February 3. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2005/Dec/27-66247.html>).)

"And so, for the next 30 days," Bush said, "I look forward to working with members of Congress and speaking to the American people as clearly as I can about the importance of renewing the Patriot Act."

Historically, Congress has tended to limit the reach of laws made during national emergencies, argu-

ing that the need for the legislation no longer might exist once the crisis has passed. The Patriot Act greatly expanded surveillance and information gathering by both the law enforcement and intelligence communities, and made it possible for intelligence agencies to share

committees in Congress.

Nineteen U.S. attorneys from 14 states and the District of Columbia attended the meeting with the president. Vice President Cheney, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Homeland Security Secretary



President George W. Bush meets with administration official and U. S. Attorneys to talk about the use and reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act in the Roosevelt Room Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2006. "This Patriot Act was passed overwhelmingly by the United States Congress in 2001," said the President in his remarks to the press. "Members from both parties came together and said we will give those on the front line of protecting America the tools necessary to protect American citizens, and at the same time, guard the civil liberties of our citizens." White House photo by Eric Draper

foreign intelligence information with U.S. domestic law enforcement agencies.

The most significant of the revisions sought in the 2005 reauthorization of the law are stronger requirements on law enforcement agencies to seek and obtain approval from the federal courts for searches and surveillance. The reauthorization also calls for increased reporting to oversight

Mike Chertoff also took part.

Bush's remarks (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060103.html>) after the meeting are available on the White House Web site.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Times Square a Focus of New Year's Eve Festivities

By Michael Jay Friedman
Washington File Staff Writer

If the beginning of a new year represents the chance to start anew, it surely is appropriate that millions of Americans associate New Year's Eve with New York City's Times Square. In a nation founded on the individual's opportunity to reinvent himself or herself, its largest city always has been at the forefront of change, and supplied a nexus of energy, ambition and drive.

For much of the past century, the neighborhood, centered on the intersection of Broadway, Seventh Avenue and 42nd Street, similarly has been reinvented time and again, but remained always a place where New Yorkers -- in the words of the social commentator and Romanian immigrant Andrei Codrescu, that "quick, witty, generous but not stupid breed of citizen" -- come to play.

NEW YEAR'S IN TIMES SQUARE

With the 1904 opening of the subway through "midtown" Manhattan, some businesses moved there from the Wall Street financial district. One was the New York Times newspaper, which relocated to a new tower at the heart of Longacre Square, soon renamed Times Square. The paper responded with a New Year's Eve party complete with fireworks. "No more beautiful picture," the next day's Times recounted, "was ever limned in fire on the curtain of midnight." In 1907, the city government out-

lawed fireworks but the festivities continued, centered on the "dropping of the ball," a custom derived from harbor time signals. At 11:59 p.m. each December 31, a six-foot wide, half-ton Waterford crystal ball is lowered along a pole



Hundreds of thousands of revelers watch as the year 2006 is brought in with fireworks in New York's Times Square.

atop the One Times Square building. It reaches the base of its tower precisely one minute later, signaling a new year. This seemingly mundane event is witnessed live by a crowd numbering in the hundreds of thousands. The images of these celebrants -- often young, always boisterous, and typically fortified by one means or another against below freezing winter temperatures -- are televised throughout the United States and in much of the world.

while, In the surrounding blocks, thousands attend Broadway plays, enjoy music at B.B. King's or dine at establishments ranging from long-established favorites to the latest in "theme cuisine." The Times Square New Year's party has changed over the past 100 years, and will continue to do so, but this very special neighborhood offers a true story of American life, verve and renewal.

20TH CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT CAPITAL

Before the neighborhood became what author James Traub calls "the global capital of popular culture," it was home to New York's horse and livery trades. With the 20th century, the horses gave way to the theaters. In 1895, the cigar manufacturer Oscar Hammerstein I (grandfather of the lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II) built the Olympia Theatre on Longacre Square. By 1910, Times Square boasted some 40 theaters, including the 5,200-seat Hippodrome, then the world's largest. Illuminated by the theaters' bright marquee lights, the strip of Broadway passing through the area became known as the "Great White Way."

Times Square theaters swiftly became the center of the nation's vaudeville revues, eclectic multiact shows that featured music, comedy and novelty performers. 1907 saw the arrival of the Ziegfeld Follies, with their elaborate production values and beautiful chorus girls. As Traub recounts, it was in and around Times Square that

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Times Square a Focus of New Year's Eve Festivities

(Continued from page 7)

many Americans "first heard rag-time music, and ogled chorus girls, and danced dangerous ... dances ... and sat right on stage in the thrilling Parisian import known as the cabaret."

With World War I, motion pictures became an important part of the Times Square experience. A number of stage theaters were converted to screen, while huge, ornate "movie palaces" rose nearby. The 1920s saw the development of the American musical, a form of theatre combining music, songs, dance and spoken dialogue. For several decades, the Broadway musical was possibly the most prolific source of American popular music, showcasing the works of Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin and other craftsmen.

Even as Times Square emerged as an entertainment capital, the neighborhood retained a rougher edge. As far back as 1905, strollers could admire an electric billboard of the "Heatherbloom Petticoat Girl," her dress blown upward by a neon rainstorm, revealing her legs. The Great Depression that began in 1929 brought this hardness to the fore. The stories of Damon Runyon (1880–1946) depict the neighborhood's Depression-era gamblers, petty thieves, actors and gangsters as colorful "wise guys" with names like "Nathan Detroit," "Harry the Horse" and "Good Time Charlie."

Millions of Americans associate the end of World War II with Times

Square. Some recall the "Truman Announces Japanese Surrender" message on the plaza's news "zipper," others the famous Alfred Eisenstaedt photograph of a jubilant sailor stealing a kiss from a nurse also celebrating the war's end.

ENTERING THE 21ST CENTURY RENEWED AND REVITALIZED

During the 1960s and 1970s, a number of factors changed the neighborhood in disquieting ways. Many Americans moved to the suburbs, and television absorbed more of their leisure time. Americans continued to jam the square on New Year's Eve, but, increasingly, they shared the neighborhood with purveyors of more frankly adult forms of entertainment, and with increased drug use and crime.

Even as Broadway musicals celebrated themes of individual renewal, the surrounding streets came to experience a renewal of their own. Determined municipal efforts drove crime down and "adult entertainment" (mostly) out. Zoning and "landmark laws" encouraged new development while protecting classic theaters from destruction and, requiring use of the square's trademark neon-bright signage.

Today's Times Square differs in some ways from its predecessors but also remains the lively, quirky, diverse funhouse of old. In March 2005, the world championship of women's chess was played in a windowed, street-level Times Square studio, on the very streets

where Robert John Burck, also known as the "Naked Cowboy," poses in his underwear for photos with passersby, and the "Reverend Billy" of the "Church of Stop Shopping" spreads his gospel to Christmas bargain hunters. Among the bargains are the 1.5 million half-price theater tickets sold annually at the TKTS booth for the Great White Way's dramas, musicals and revivals -- many of the Broadway classics return to the stage again and again. Visitors and residents also are attracted by the great shopping, the music clubs and movies -- the rush of the new and the memories of the old.

In the end, Times Square remains much as James Traub described it during an earlier era, "an incredibly democratic entertainment place ... [home to] all the varying influences whose incongruous coming together made American culture possible." Come December 31, Americans sense this, as they resolve their own personal renewals and look forward to the future.

For more information about American people, places and customs, see U.S. Life and Culture (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Joint Chiefs Chairman Tours Middle East, Asia, Africa

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Washington File Security Affairs
Writer

Washington – President Bush's top military adviser, on a trip that will take him to three continents, says the United States plans to pass on more security responsibilities to Iraqi forces in the coming months, but the number of U.S. troops leaving Iraq in 2006 will depend on how well U.S. commanders on the ground have accessed the situation there.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine General Peter Pace told reporters traveling with him on a trip to the United Arab Emirates December 29 that as the Iraqi Army and police gain greater skills they will assume control of ever wider areas of territories regardless of the number of insurgents still there. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2005/Dec/29-853039.html>).)

The number of U.S. troops assigned to Iraq grew to around 160,000 for the Iraqi elections, but now military commanders are planning gradually to bring that number down in the first quarter of 2006 to a pre-election level of 138,000. The Associated Press reported Pace as saying: "We are going to have to watch how these draw downs go to see if we have judged it properly."

If it turns out to be the correct decision, the total force level could drop even further, perhaps to as few as 100,000 before the end of 2006. During a stopover in Bahrain on December 28, Pace

said: "We will continue to work with the Iraqi government to see how much more responsibility can be handled on to their armed forces, so that all coalition forces – not just the U.S. – can turn over more and more to the Iraqis and go home." (See related



Marine General Peter Pace
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
AP Photo

article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2005&m=December&x=20051223160416ndy-blehs0.6932947&t=is/is-latest.html>).)

Pace, on his first trip to the region since becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was quoted in Bahrain's Gulf Daily News as saying one-third of Iraq's capital, Baghdad, already is under the complete control of Iraqi forces. During a December 29 press conference at a Bahraini naval facility in Juffair, he said the first U.S. troop reductions would occur now through the end of March.

Acknowledging that violence continues to dominate the news in

Baghdad, Army Major General William Webster said until the new Iraqi government "is seated and secure and Iraqi security forces are relatively disciplined and fully trained" some amount of chaos is to be expected.

Webster, who commands the multinational division in Baghdad, said in a December 30 briefing from Iraq that what he notices when he is in the sky above the city of 6 million people is that its borders are expanding with "large numbers of houses being built" on the capital's fringes in almost every direction. "There are people out there building new houses and adding on to their homes that already exist in most every neighborhood," he said, "and that says that there is some money out there and there is also hope for the future."

For those who criticize the pace of the transition, Webster said "the war is being conducted in a very complex combat environment, and, we are moving the ball forward." He also said those under his command – including soldiers from Estonia, Georgia and Macedonia – have noticed that the potency of the insurgency has diminished since the December 15 election.

Asked to clarify his statement Webster said, "Since the elections, the Iraqi insurgency is weaker in terms of the types of attacks they're able to conduct, and, the number of attacks is down." Measured against data assembled in 2004, he said the num-

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U.S. Library of Congress Adds 25 Films to National Film Registry

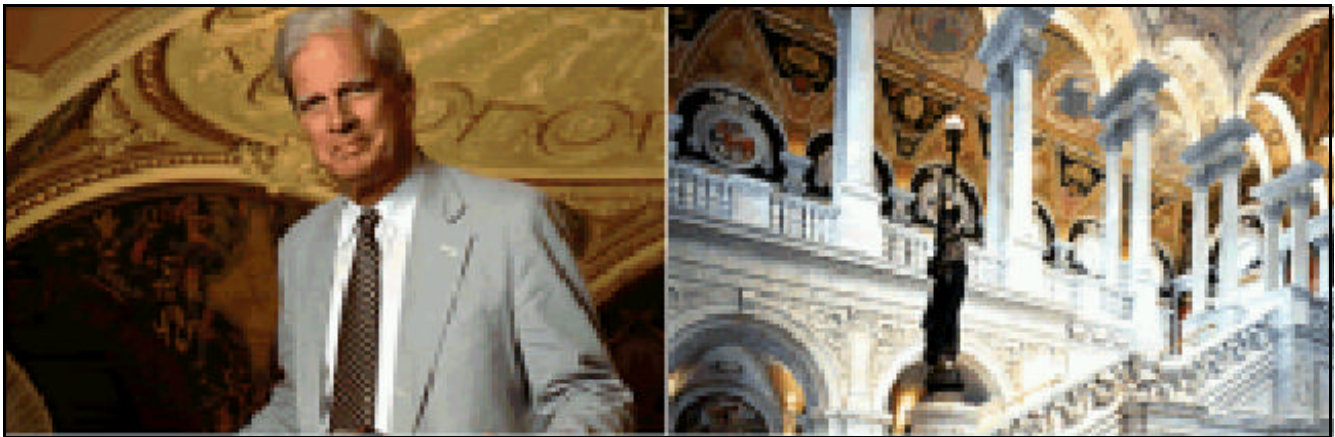
By Michael J. Bandler
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- In keeping with a 1989 U.S. congressional mandate aimed at ensuring the preservation of "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" American

have cultural historical or aesthetic significance," he said.

According to the legislation, the National Film Preservation Act, that established the registry, the Library of Congress must ensure that each film named to the registry will be preserved for all time, either

achieved a cult status. Many are from original scripts and some, such as *Giant* and *Imitation of Life*, are adaptations of novels (by Edna Ferber and Fannie Hurst, respectively). The list also includes films such as *Power of the Press* and *Hands Up*, both from the 1920s, which are all but forgotten gems.



Dr. James H. Billington- Librarian of Congress

The Library of Congress is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and serves as the research arm of Congress. It is also the largest library in the world, with more than 130 million items on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves. The collections include more than 29 million books and other printed materials, 2.7 million recordings, 12 million photographs, 4.8 million maps, and 58 million manuscripts.

films, James H. Billington, the librarian of the U.S. Congress, on December 20 announced a roster of 25 motion pictures to be added to the National Film Registry.

The movies in the new list, covering a nine-decade span from 1906 to 1995, include documentaries and features -- westerns, musicals, comedies, family-oriented entertainments, silent films and stories from the sports world. In announcing the choices, Billington stressed that the selections do not necessarily mean the films are the "best" of their kind, nor does their inclusion represent an endorsement -- or lack of one -- of any ideology or content. But in many instances, they represent others of their particular theme or genre, and "continue to

through the Library of Congress' own motion picture preservation program or in collaboration with various archives, film studios and independent filmmakers around the United States and even abroad. With the addition of the 25 films, the registry now totals 425.

Of the newly added motion pictures, some, such as *The Music Man* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, long have been familiar favorites. Others, such as *The French Connection* and *The Sting*, have been showered with awards. Some, including *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Hoop Dreams*, are mirrors on an evolving America, while others, such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, have

The cast of characters among the actors is equally diverse -- ranging from legendary silent film comedian Buster Keaton and the formidable African-American star Sidney Poitier. Films on the list also feature performers who remain active and influential today, including Robert Redford, Sean Penn, Paul Newman and Gene Hackman.

The eclecticism of the 2005 selections -- and, indeed, of the full registry -- is underscored by the documentaries included. A devastating earthquake and an equally horrific flood, films and audio recordings illuminating a black religious community in the American South in 1940, a paean to water, a chronicle of two inner-city youths trying

(Continued on page 13)

U.S. Space Agency Lists Space Exploration Milestones for 2005

The U.S. space agency NASA completed a year of milestones and discoveries in 2005 as it begins to implement the Vision for Space Exploration, America's long-term plan for returning astronauts to the moon to prepare for voyages to Mars and other destinations in the solar system.

According to a December 22 NASA press release, 2005 achievements included returning the space shuttle to flight, the extended exploration of Mars by two robotic rovers and the international Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn.

In July, space shuttle Discovery completed a complex flight to the International Space Station, the first mission since the Columbia accident in 2003.

The mission included complex maneuvers, spacewalks and tests of new procedures and safety equipment. The flight was successful, but engineers remain concerned about the shuttle's external tank insulating foam, which escapes from the external tank during launch and can damage the craft.

NASA is committed to solving this problem before launching the next shuttle mission. Images and infor-

mation (<http://www.nasa.gov/returntoflight>) on the Discovery mission are available on the NASA Web site.

Also in 2005, the Mars exploration rovers Spirit and Opportunity continued studying the harsh Martian environment.



Spirit discovered the composition of rock outcrops altered by water, and Opportunity found evidence that water once flowed across the Martian surface.

Both rovers have completed a full Martian year of exploration and discovery. Images and information (<http://www.nasa.gov/mars>) are available on the NASA Web site.

On December 24, 2004, the Huygens probe descended through the murky atmosphere of Saturn's largest moon, Titan. It landed on Titan January 14 and discovered that the moon is remarkably Earth-like.

The probe found evidence of methane rain, erosion, drainage channels, dry lakebeds, volcanism and very few craters.

During the year, the Cassini spacecraft toured Saturn's moons and sent back breathtaking photographs of the icy satellites. Images and information (<http://www.nasa.gov/cassini>) are available on the NASA Web site.

The Cassini-Huygens mission is a cooperative project of NASA, the European Space Agency and Agenzia Spaziale Italiana, the Italian space agency. ♦

U.S., U.N. Welcome International Review of Iraqi Elections

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan have welcomed a mis-



Dr. Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Secretary of State

sion by international experts to review the conduct of Iraq's legislative elections December 15 and rule on their fairness.

"I welcome the invitation of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) to international monitors and experts to observe and review the December 15 elections, including the complaints and settlement process," Rice said in a statement released December 29.

The international review will be conducted by two representatives from the Arab League, one representative from the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, and a European academic under the auspices of the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE).

"It is critical that those Iraqi groups who have complained about the conduct of the election are given a hearing. This team of assessors, which was not involved in the conduct of the elections, offers an independent evaluation of these complaints," Annan said in a statement December 29.

The announcement of the IMIE review came after Sunni and secular Shia groups refused to open talks on forming a coalition government with the Shia religious bloc until there has been a full review of the contested results.

For additional information, see Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html).

Following are the texts of Rice's and Annan's statements:

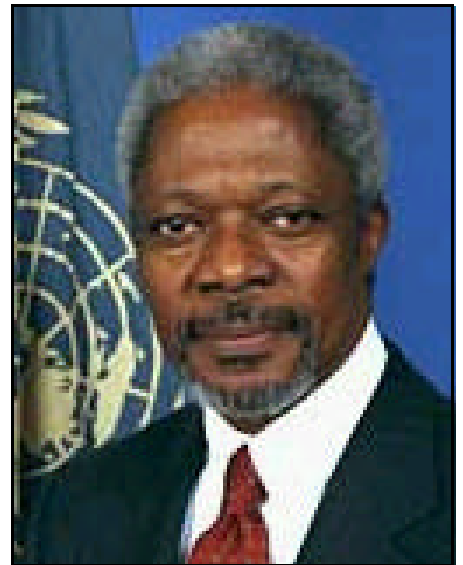
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
December 29, 2005

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE

International Monitors and Experts in Iraq

I welcome the invitation of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) to international monitors and experts to observe and review the December 15 elections, including the complaints settlement process. I also welcome endorsements of the Electoral Commission's action by parties that have voiced grievances regarding the December 15 election.

The Electoral Commission has once again demonstrated its commitment to fair and credible elections that meet international standards. It is a reminder of the critical role of this independent body in ensuring the integrity of the de-



Kofi Annan
U.N. Secretary General

mocratic process. The United Nations is also playing an important role in support of the elections and vote counting.

The United States strongly supports the election review process. The December 15 election, the work of the IECI and the ongoing political process are all signs that the Iraqi people are committed to democracy and the peaceful resolution of political differences.

We look forward to final results that represent the will of the Iraqi people and are accepted by them.

United Nations Secretary-General
Office of the Spokesman

(Continued on page 13)

U.S. Library of Congress Adds 25 Films to National . . .

(Continued from page 10)

to obtain a college athletic scholarship, a glimpse of an historic championship boxing match from the early years of the 20th century and a silent film about one state's public education effort directed at immigrant Americans reflect the landscape that film has explored over the past hundred years.

In the announcement, Billington listed some of the factors that imperil film and some troubling statistics.

"Fifty percent of the films produced before 1950, and 80 to 90 percent made before 1920, have disappeared forever. . . . More films are lost each year -- through the ravages of nitrate deterioration, color-fading and 'vinegar syndrome,' which threatens the acetate-based film stock on which the vast majority of motion pictures, past and present, have been reproduced.

"By preserving American films," Billington said, "we safeguard a significant element of American creativity and our cultural history for the enjoyment and education of future generations."

Following are the 25 films added to the National Film Registry in December 2005:

Baby Face (1933)
The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man (1975)
The Cameraman (1928)
Commandment Keeper Church, Beaufort, South Carolina, May 1940 (1940)
Cool Hand Luke (1967)
Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982)
The French Connection (1971)
Giant (1956)
H2O (1929)
Hands Up (1926)
Hoop Dreams (1994)
House of Usher (1960)
Imitation of Life (1934)
Jeffries-Johnson World's Championship Boxing Contest (1910)

Making of an American (1920)
Miracle on 34th Street (1947)
Mom and Dad (1944)
The Music Man (1962)
Power of the Press (1928)
A Raisin in the Sun (1961)
The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)
San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, April 18, 1906 (1906)
The Sting (1973)
A Time for Burning (1966)
Toy Story (1995)

More information (<http://www.loc.gov/film/>) on the films and selection process is available on the National Film Preservation Board Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

U.S., U.N. Welcome International Review of Iraqi . . .

(Continued from page 12)

New York, 29 December 2005 - Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Iraq

The Secretary-General welcomes today's decision by the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) to establish a team of assessors, including two representatives from the League of Arab States, to conduct a follow-up assessment to its interim report released on 15 December.

The Secretary-General strongly supports the ongoing efforts by

the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) to investigate and audit all complaints received before certifying the results of the 15 December elections.

This is why the United Nations has encouraged the IECI to invite additional international observers to support this process. It is critical that those Iraqi groups who have complained about the conduct of the election are given a hearing. This team of assessors, which was not involved in the conduct of the elections, offers an independent evaluation of these complaints.

The Secretary-General notes that the IECI has welcomed the IMIE's decision. He hopes that these efforts will assist in successfully completing the certification process.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

U.S. General Says Iraq Insurgents Lack Sustainability

By Merle D. Kellerhals Jr.
Washington File Staff Writer

state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Dec/15-289039.html).)

Afghanistan by 2,000 or 3,000 troops in early to mid-2006.

Washington -- Insurgents in Iraq are showing little capacity to keep up numerous and persistent attacks, a senior U.S. general in Baghdad says.

At a briefing December 29, Air Force Brigadier General C.D. Alston said there are three reasons for the diminishing capability of the insurgents to keep up attacks. The ability of insurgents to wage sustained combat is a key indicator closely watched by U.S. military forces to determine the enemy's effectiveness.

"The first is the joint offensive operations that have been launched by coalition forces and Iraqi security forces over the course of the last several months," said Alston, who is the director of strategic communications for the Multinational Force Iraq.

The security offensive has been focused on defeating terrorists and foreign fighters, and disrupting the insurgency, he said, with great effect.

The second reason, he said, is the progressive training and equipping of Iraqi security forces.

"They continue to grow, with phenomenal capabilities. Today, there are 223,000 trained and equipped members of the Iraqi security forces," Alston said during the briefing carried by a Pentagon teleconference from Baghdad.

He said the impact of the expanded security forces was most noticeable during the December 15 Council of Representatives elections. (See related article ([http://usinfo.state.gov/](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Dec/27-823864.html)

Alston said the third factor that has contributed to the diminishing capacity of the insurgents has been the active participation in the political process by Sunni Iraqis. (See Iraq's Political Process (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/political_process.html).)

However, he acknowledged that there are still terrorists and insurgents in Iraq determined to destroy what the Iraqis are trying to accomplish.

"So increasingly powerful Iraqi security forces, with support from coalition forces, will continue focused operations to eliminate the terrorists and enable an environment in which freedom and democracy can prosper," he said.

The key for Iraq, he said, is the ability of its security forces -- civilian and military -- to provide for its national security.

Because of this improvement among Iraqi security forces, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said during recent appearances in Iraq that the United States would reduce the number of combat troops there by approximately 7,000 in 2006. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2005/Dec/27-823864.html>).)

The United States has maintained a force of approximately 137,000 troops in Iraq, though that number has surged during elections to as much as 160,000 for brief periods.

In addition, he said the United States plans to reduce its forces in

"The United States government has, as the president has indicated, been periodically assessing the situation in Afghanistan and assessing the conditions on the ground, and then making judgments about our arrangements and our numbers and our activities in Afghanistan," Rumsfeld said while traveling across the Middle East and South Asia.

Also, he said the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is aided by a decision from NATO to expand its forces there through the International Security Assistance Force.

Army General George W. Casey Jr., commander of Multinational Force Iraq, said the decision to reduce the number of combat brigades in Iraq from 17 to 15 is in direct response to the improved security provided by Iraqi forces.

One of two brigades that had been scheduled to go to Iraq in a regular rotation will be held in Kuwait as a "call-forward force," he said, which means they can move quickly into Iraq if needed, but can continue training at the same time.

"It's a hedge against the uncertainty of the next few months," he said.

For additional information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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American Tea Merchant Improves Lives of Darjeeling Tea Growers

By Steve Holgate
Washington File Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon -- In the mountains of eastern India, the pickers pluck the tender top leaves from the tea bushes that cover the slopes like a great green blanket. When they have finished, the sacks of leaves are taken to the factories for drying and fermentation. The resulting withered black wisps are "the champagne of teas," from the great Darjeeling tea estates. This precious cargo is trucked down the mountains to India's bustling ports for shipment to markets around the world.

After these teas left, what came back to Darjeeling? What could one expect to come back? In

the past, the answer was enough money to pay the workers' modest wages and maintain the tea estates. This has begun to change.

Through a remarkable partnership between an American tea company and a private American non-profit group, hundreds of thousands of dollars that might have gone into company profits, instead have come back to Darjeeling in the form of new programs to improve the tea growers' lives.

In cooperation with the management of the tea estates, Tazo Tea, a seller of specialty teas based in Portland, Oregon, has teamed with Mercy Corps, an international relief organization, to deliver programs

to bolster health care, provide infrastructure, deliver vocational training and improve community life in one of the humblest regions of India.

These new programs are the dream child of Steve Smith, founder of Tazo Tea. Smith, dressed in

founding Tazo, he launched a more far-reaching and systematic program, the Collaboration for Hope and Advancement in India (CHAI).

"I had started to think of something we might do that would be sustainable, going beyond the structure of the tea estates," he says. "The basis of our program is not just to put money back in, but to support the region and to see that the neediest find support."

Smith knew that he needed a partner to bring his vision to reality. After some searching, he found an international relief organization located in Portland, less than 5 kilometers



Indian Tea Plantation

casual shirt, no tie, no coat -- the laid-back style of the American Northwest -- speaks with quiet intensity of his desire to help the people who grow the teas he sells. "After traveling to India for 20 years, I found the people to be delightful, having so little, yet being so pure of heart," he says. "I wanted to do something to help them."

SEARCHING FOR A SUSTAINABLE AID PROGRAM

Smith started modestly in the early 1990s. While working with another tea company, he donated money for the purchase of schoolbooks for villages near the tea estates. In 2002, six years after

leaving his company headquarters.

By coincidence, Mercy Corps, too, was looking for a chance to realize an expanded vision. The organization had an excellent reputation in disaster relief, but it wanted to extend the scope of its programs and shared Smith's desire for a sustainable aid program. It proved an excellent match.

Hayley Hawes, a program officer with Mercy Corps' office of corporate partnership, said, "Mercy Corps was really intrigued by the social and economic issues of the program. We also wanted to move beyond the usual donor-

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American Tea Merchant Improves Lives of Darjeeling . . .

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recipient relationship," in which one party writes the checks while the other carries out the work, "to a real partnership in which we both had a stake."

The program they developed, CHAI, has established programs in three areas of emphasis:

Improving health conditions, especially through improved sanitation and access to clean water;

Enhancing community development by helping villagers find the means to address the needs that they deem most urgent; and

Working towards a more prosperous future by developing leadership and vocational skills among the region's young people.

Smith said the estate managers also emerged as participants in the development projects.

"Many of them are trying to do the right thing," said Smith, who added that management, too, struggles with a lack of resources. "It's best for everyone to find a more harmonious way to work."

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

In its more than three years of existence, CHAI has exceeded expectations. More than 120 villages have applied to participate in the program, which originally was designed for 12 villages. In the program's second year, Tazo and Mercy Corps added 12 more. The spending target for the first three years of \$600,000 has been exceeded by almost 50 percent.

CHAI enters its second three-year program having achieved impressive results. Modern pipes have replaced leaky bamboo water systems, bringing more and cleaner water to villages. The initiative has resulted in the construction of 395 latrines and has enabled 6,053 people to receive emergency health care and referral services. Under the initiative, 58 youth loans destined for 29 businesses have been granted, and training has been organized for 27 paramedics and 269 peer educators, the latter of whom have taught 10,465 people. Muddy, dangerous footpaths have been resurfaced to allow safer passage. Roads have been improved and community centers built.

Starbucks Coffee, which has purchased Tazo and retained Smith to oversee its tea operations, has been a full partner, adding its financial support and encouragement. The tea estates have made important contributions, resulting in the sort of multidimensional partnership that Smith had envisioned.

One memorable case involved two villages with a long history of mutual ill will. Each wanted a new community center for its exclusive use. Smith proposed building one community center on the condition that the two villages share it. After difficult negotiations, they finally agreed, opening a new relationship between the two villages.

CHAI goes beyond physical infrastructure to create human infrastructure, or capacity building. Unemployment and lack of health care often hinder the development of the tea-growing regions, leading to unrest and re-

duced economic activity, Smith says. CHAI addresses both issues by training many otherwise unemployed young men and women as health workers. CHAI has helped train others in fields as varied as television repair and taxi driving. Smith says that Tazo, Starbucks and the tea growers "are trying to improve living conditions and create opportunities for those living and working in the villages of the tea-growing regions."

Smith and Mercy Corps avoid imposing solutions on the area and instead allow the villagers to establish their project priorities. CHAI envisions a time when these villages will have developed the capacity to address their challenges without the need for outside help.

Seeking new horizons, Tazo and Mercy Corps are hoping to expand the CHAI program into neighboring tea growing regions.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Arab American Institute Seeks To Consolidate 20 Years of Gains

By Nidal Ibrahim
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- A group of about 50 leading Arab Americans from across the United States gathered in Washington to discuss the future of the Arab American Institute (AAI), the Arab-American community's foremost political organization.

At issue were the structure, the programs and the future direction of the institute, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2005 and was launched to involve Arab Americans in the U.S. political process.

The Washington meeting in November marked the second convening of the newly formed National Policy Council (NPC), formed to "broaden the national leadership in the institute and invest more people in the decision-making process," according to AAI President James Zogby. The NPC is made up of Arab-American leaders representing almost every significant U.S. population center, country of origin, religion and political orientation.

The AAI began in 1985, when a group of five individuals met in Washington to launch a new organization, which would be part policy research and analysis and part activist group, with a simple but ambitious goal: make the Arab-American vote count.

Over the years, Zogby and his small staff have pursued that goal by straightforward methods: politi-

cal organizing, voter registration efforts, get out the vote campaigns and educating Arab Americans about the American political



James Zogby
Arab American Institute President

party structure and how they can best take part in such forums.

Today, the Arab American Institute, in many ways, has succeeded beyond its initial expectations. The 3.5 million Americans who trace their roots to the Arab world do indeed matter. They vote in percentages far higher than the general U.S. population. They have joined political parties and become leaders in those party structures, such as William Hamzy, chairman of the Republican Party of Connecticut, and Elias Khawam, a member of the California Democratic Central Committee.

Arab Americans in the U.S. House of Representatives include Darrel Issa from California and Nick Rahall from West Virginia. Senator John Sununu from New Hampshire traces his ancestral roots to the Middle East.

Rima Nashashibi, vice chair of the Democratic Party of Orange County, California, credits her political accomplishments to AAI.

"I'm one of the ones that AAI started in the political process," say Nashashibi, who also is president of the Arab American Democratic Club in California and is a co-founder of the California State Democratic Party's Arab-American Caucus.

"If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am. Jim [Zogby] started me on this road. He started by asking me to run for a delegate position during the national convention when Jesse Jackson ran for [presidential] office," she said.

Like others, Nashashibi is well aware of the AAI's pivotal role in Arab American political life. "It's extremely important because it's the only viable organization that I know of that has encouraged Arab Americans to register to vote, to get involved in the local political process and to vote," she said.

Samer Khalaf is another activist who credits AAI for bringing "political legitimacy for our community." An attorney in New Jersey who is active in local and state

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China Reports Seventh Human Case of Bird Flu

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – China's Ministry of Health reports another human death from a highly pathogenic form of avian influenza, the seventh case to appear in the nation of 1.3 billion people, and the third death attributed to the H5N1 virus.

The World Health Organization affirmed China's findings in the case December 30.

The latest victim is a 41-year-old woman from the southeastern province of Fujian who developed a fever December 6. That symptom was followed by lung inflammation that advanced to pneumonia. She was admitted to the hospital on December 8 and died on December 21.

China reported its first human cases of H5N1 in November, though China, like most nations of the region, has been battling animal outbreaks in domestic poultry flocks since the winter of 2003-2004. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Nov/16-627216.html>).)

In this two year period – during which the most extensive, widespread plague of avian influenza ever seen emerged -- China has not been among the most severely affected nations, according to figures compiled by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Both Thailand and Vietnam have experienced seasons with hundreds of outbreaks, requiring the culling of thousands of birds, but China's worst season was marked by 50 outbreaks in 2003-2004. Additional information

(http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html) is available on the FAO's Web site.

When the first avian influenza cases appeared in humans, China became the fifth nation to docu-

poultry. Agriculture officials have not been able to detect H5N1 in the poultry found near where she worked or lived. None of her close contacts have developed disease symptoms, three weeks after this patient first took ill December 6.



A farmer grabs hold of a duck in Nanzhuang village, November 2005, on the outskirts of Anqing in central China's Anhui province. China announced the country's seventh human case of bird flu and third fatality from the H5N1 virus, state media said.(AFP/File/Frederic J. Brown)

ment the movement of this animal disease into people. Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam previously reported human illness and death from H5N1, a total of more than 140 cases now affirmed by the WHO with 74 deaths. Thailand and Vietnam have suffered the most with 14 and 42 deaths, respectively.

QUESTIONS ABOUND FROM NEW CASE

The questions that surround this new case in China might have come from a mystery story. The woman had no known exposure to

Where did she get the virus? Where is it hiding in the environment? What can epidemiologists learn about H5N1 and it's potential to cause broader outbreaks of human disease from the circumstances of her illness? Health officials still are working to answer those questions.

In most human cases, the path of infection from sick birds to humans has been readily identified. Poultry workers, farmers, people who have slaughtered chickens, children who have been playing in yards with infected

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China Reports Seventh Human Case of Bird Flu

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chickens – these are the types of cases most frequently seen among humans.

The human cases so far have not shown a pattern of easy human-to-human transmission, through contact as casual as a cough or sneeze. That tells health officials that the H5N1 virus has not yet mutated to develop the capability to become easily contagious among humans. If it does, then an influenza pandemic could result because this viral strain has so rarely appeared in humans that people would have little immunity to fight the virulent pathogen.

The year ends with a markedly heightened international awareness of the possibility for pandemic and the need to prevent it. The issue has been at the forefront of a se-

ries of major international meetings and conferences since May.

In September, President Bush launched the International Partnership for Avian and Pandemic Influenza, which now has the support of almost 90 nations and the major international organizations involved with health and agriculture. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Nov/25-880824.html>).)

In the few months since formation of the partnership, acting Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Environment and Science Anthony “Bud” Rock says there has been “a dramatic difference in heightened awareness” about pandemic in other nations.

Testifying at a congressional hearing December 7, Rock said the international discussion of pandemic

also has brought on more dialogue between ministries of public and animal health in many countries. A key action to prevent pandemic will be greater surveillance of disease among animals and humans with recognition of how their close contact can result in an exchange of viruses and exposure to previously unknown diseases. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Dec/08-292530.html>).)

For ongoing coverage of U.S. and international efforts to combat avian influenza, see Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Arab American Institute Seeks To Consolidate 20 . . .

(Continued from page 17)

politics, Khalaf says one of AAI’s central roles has been to create a structure and links for people such as himself to coordinate and meet with Arab Americans with similar interests across the country.

“Without AAI, we lose that national political voice and in essence we also lose that one thing that kind of binds us,” he said. “That’s

what binds me as a New Jersey activist to Alia [Haddad] who is an L.A. [Los Angeles] activist. It brings together a national network. Without that we’re individual people working on a local stage.”

The NPC and the institutionalization process it is spearheading seek to expand the organization’s reach to a broader audience, develop the next generation of Arab-

American leaders and create a self-sustaining, financially secure organization.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Bird Flu, HIV/AIDS Are Top Health Issues of 2005, U.N. Says

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The broadest outbreak of avian influenza ever to occur, with its potential to spark pandemic influenza among humans, is considered the most significant health issue of 2005 in a survey conducted by the World Health Organization [WHO].

More than 600 people from 20-plus countries participated in the online survey entitled “How healthy is your world?” Respondents were asked just two questions:

What were the top health issues of 2005?

What global health issues were the most neglected?

A December 20 press notice on the survey also notes the agreement on the issues expressed by respondents.

“It is striking that no matter where you are from, how your circumstances differ, you care about the same health issues,” the press release said. “Respondents to our survey from China to Nigeria to the United States of America had almost identical concerns.”

AVIAN INFLUENZA/BIRD FLU

All year, international health officials have been intensifying their warnings about the seriousness of avian influenza and pandemic influenza, and the survey seems to indicate people are receiving the message as they selected that issue to top the list of health concerns.

December 2005 marks two years since the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1 began appearing in humans. Since that time, just

more than 140 humans have taken ill with the disease, and 71 have died.

The disease has caused the deaths of more than 150 million birds as it has crept out of Southeast Asia, now appearing in birds as far away as Romania, Croatia and Turkey. Notably, however, as the disease has occurred in birds across a greater sweep of territory, the human exposures have increased only slowly. No human cases have appeared outside Southeast Asia.

So far virtually all human cases are connected to exposure to diseased birds, their waste or environs. Health officials have yet to find that H5N1 has developed the capability to be easily transmitted human-to-human, a development that could cause a human pandemic.

HIV/AIDS

WHO survey respondents gave HIV/AIDS the second-place spot on their lists of most significant health issues of the year. The annual global survey of the scope of the disease issued in November found that 5 million new infections worldwide occurred in 2005.

AIDS Epidemic Update 2005 also estimated that more than 40 million people around the world are living with HIV/AIDS.

Perhaps reflecting the complexity of the AIDS issue, the disease also was cited second among diseases most likely to be ignored, with respondents expressing concern about its inordinate effect on women and its capability to destroy families.

The magnitude of the AIDS epidemic is huge, but 2005 did see progress in the distribution and de-

livery of the medicines that can help the sick. The two-year old President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, working with partner organizations in its target countries, has arranged drug therapy for 400,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. The goal of the campaign is to raise that number to 2 million over the next few years.

For ongoing coverage of U.S. efforts to fight the disease, see HIV/AIDS. (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/hiv_aids.html)

TOBACCO

Like HIV/AIDS, the deleterious health effects of tobacco also appeared near the top of both lists of issues judged most significant and most ignored. WHO reports that respondents cited the risks of secondhand smoke and aggressive tobacco marketing as grounds for their belief that the issue has been neglected.

Despite the respondents’ conclusions, tobacco control did pass an important milestone in 2005 when the U.N. Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) took effect in February after ratification by enough nations to codify the document. As 2005 comes to a close, WHO reports that 114 nations are parties to the agreement, which sets international standards on tobacco prices, tax increases, product labeling and advertising and sponsorship.

The first meeting of the FCTC (<http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/en/>) will be held in Geneva in February 2006.♦

U.S. Co-sponsors U.N. Malaria Resolution for Developing Countries

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The United States co-sponsored a resolution involving malaria December 28, 2005, that was passed in New York by the United Nations General Assembly.

The resolution – 2001-2010 Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa – urges member states afflicted by malaria to strengthen national prevention policies and plans so that 80 percent of those at risk for or suffering from malaria will benefit from major interventions by 2010.

The agreement also calls on the international community to continue working to reduce the burden of malaria by 75 percent by 2015.

Malaria, one of the most devastating infectious diseases in many areas of the world, is a leading cause of death and disease in many developing countries.

On June 30, 2005, President Bush challenged the world for dramatic reductions in malaria as a major killer of children in sub-Saharan Africa.

"The toll of malaria is even more tragic because the disease itself is highly treatable and preventable," Bush said on announcing the initiative. "Yet this is also our opportu-

nity because we know that large-scale action can defeat this disease in whole regions." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Jul/01-336659.html>) and fact sheet (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Jul/01-587232.html>).)

Bush pledged to increase U.S. funding of malaria prevention and treatment by more than \$1.2 bil-



lion over five years with an aim to reduce malaria deaths by 50 percent in targeted African countries.

The U.N. resolution calls for the World Health Organization, the U.N. Children's Fund and other international organizations to help national governments establish protection for young children and pregnant women in malaria-endemic countries, particularly Africa.

The resolution also calls on the international community to:

Help invest in the development of new drugs to prevent and treat malaria, especially for children and

pregnant women, including diagnostic tests, vaccines and insecticides and delivery methods.

Help expand access to combination therapy with artemisinin, a drug used to treat multidrug-resistant strains of malaria from *Plasmodium falciparum*, a dangerous species of the *Plasmodium* parasite that causes malaria in people.

Support increased interventions and help strengthen health systems, monitor for counterfeit anti-malarial medicines and provide technical assistance to improve surveillance, monitoring and evaluation systems.

The resolution also urges member states, the international community and the private sector to promote the coordinated implementation of malaria-related activities and to enhance their quality.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

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Botswana Praised as Economic Model for . . .

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vestors worldwide, with the return on investment at the Ghana Exchange being the highest at 144 percent.

President Mogae, who was in New York to attend the proceedings surrounding the 60th anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly, said that in addition to Botswana's "substantial relations with the United States government, we can now count the New York Stock Exchange among our friends."

Mogae said he was encouraged by the afternoon's events. "Botswana is here for inspiration," he said. "I am well aware of the market size represented here at the NYSE, and it is wonderful to be part of the awe-inspiring atmosphere."

There are more than 2,700 companies listed on the NYSE, with a mar-

ket capitalization of \$20 trillion. American-owned companies represent about \$7 trillion of the exchange's value.

Thaine said the NYSE is interested in expanding its trading capital and working with exchanges in other countries such as Botswana to develop and expand stock exchanges worldwide.

The Corporate Council on Africa's new senior adviser on financing and capital flows, Ambassador Joseph Huggins, helped coordinate the NYSE event with Botswana's permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Alfred Dube.

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Joint Chiefs Chairman Tours Middle East, . . .

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ber of attempted attacks now is higher, but those that are considered to be successful are "down to 10 percent." In 2004, the number of successful attacks ranged between 25 percent and 30 percent.

Asked by a reporter at the Pentagon via video link about the treatment of Iraqi detainees by Iraqi security forces, Webster said coalition forces are preparing them "to conduct operations within the rule of law."

On the composition of Iraq's security forces, Webster said most of the commanders and recruits in the army and special police are Shi'ite.

"We are working with the Iraqi government to ensure that we have a balanced force that lives with the rule of law," he added.

Webster said it would take time for Iraqis to set aside long-standing loyalties "and to stand up for the nation above all else."

During Pace's visit to Abu Dhabi, he pointed to efforts under way to recruit Sunnis, especially into the officer corps.

Pace also visited Qatar and reportedly is making additional stops in Iraq, Afghanistan and Djibouti. He is traveling with American entertainers who are performing for the troops as part of a United Service Organizations tour including Diana DeGarmo, a finalist for the televi-

sion program American Idol in 2004; actor and Comedy Central comedian Reggie McFadden; and country music singer Michael Peterson.

For additional information, see International Security (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/>).

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